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UNCLAS ROME 001451

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

STATE FOR IO/EDA, AF/W, NEA/ENA, OES/ENV; PASS EPA
USAID FOR DCHA, OFDA GOTTLIEB AND AFR LAVELLE
USDA FOR FAS HUGHES
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH/USAID
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SUBJECT: PESTICIDE OVERSTOCKS: FAO LETTER TO LOCUST
COMMUNITY

REF: (A) 04 ROME 0722; (B) 04 ROME 3979; (C) 04 ROME
3581; (D) 05 ROME 0764

1. Summary. The United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) alerted USUN Rome to a potential problem with pesticides overstocks in Sahelian and North African countries currently embattling desert locusts, via a letter (see below) to affected countries and the donor community to enable posts and donors to respond. USUN Rome appreciates guidance, as pesticides overstocks will be an agenda item at the May 3, 2005, Geneva Group meeting it is hosting. End Summary.

2. Background. In preparation for the spring-summer 2005 desert locust control campaign, the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has been actively engaged in contingency planning, including developing a country-by-country matrix on equipment/supplies to review resources available and identify gaps. One item meticulously being tracked is stocks of pesticides currently available in affected countries. Working with national planners in each of the front-line countries, FAO is conducting detailed, comprehensive inventories of pesticide stocks, and noted alarmingly high levels of stock in some countries. Depending on the magnitude of the 2005 campaign, the excess stocks potentially could pose a problem, which will need to be addressed later on in terms of environmentally correct disposal and/or storage. End Background.

3. To avoid a further build up of pesticide stocks through bilateral donations, as occurred in March 2005 when Moroccan King Mohamed VI donated 250,000 liters to Senegal, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf sent a letter dated April 16, 2005, to affected countries and members of the desert locust donor community to generate better coordination. The text of the letter follows:

Begin text--

--I have the honour to draw your attention to the important role played by pesticides during the Desert Locust campaign of 2004. In order to avoid the build-up of excess stocks of pesticides, while ensuring that urgent pesticide needs were met, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) drew up a list of pesticides with least harmful effects on public health and the environment and established a coordination network with the locust affected countries.

--Despite these efforts at coordination among partners, especially to avoid an excess stock of pesticides at the end of the campaign, the current pesticide stocks are estimated at 2 million litres in the Sahelian countries and at least 3.5 million litres in the North African countries. These stocks vary from 100 000 to 800 000 litres in the Sahelian countries. FAO considers the remaining stocks in certain countries far too large.

--As early as the end of October/beginning of November 2004, FAO informed all partners (international agencies and donor countries) that the available stocks of

pesticides were sufficient to face any potential invasion in 2005 and that FAO had an efficient system for the procurement and supply of pesticides to respond to any emergency situation.

--I was recently informed that some bilateral donations of pesticides were received in 2005, even after the end of the Desert Locust campaign, and further donations are foreseen. I should like to draw your attention to the potential risk of these pesticides becoming obsolete.

--I should also like to take the opportunity to inform

you that the use of these available pesticide formulations is specific to Desert Locust control and that these pesticides should be kept under appropriate storage conditions. If not, they could rapidly become obsolete, and the onerous cost of disposal would be added to that of the impact upon human health and the environment.

--Finally, I would like to share with you and with the other international agencies and donor countries my concern regarding this issue and to reiterate the continuous efforts made by FAO regarding the actual pesticide needs for the region within the Desert Locust control campaign of 2004. In this respect, I appeal for better coordination among all partners to avoid local purchases or bilateral donation of pesticides in the near future.

--I thank you for your cooperation with FAO in combating this pest and wish to compliment you on your efforts in regional assistance in Desert Locust control, especially with regard to the protection of human health and the environment.

End Text

14. FAO notes that increased attention to proper storage of remaining pesticide stocks would be required in all scenarios (best, worst and most probable case of locust infestation). Further, the best-case scenario may not necessarily be the cheapest, as significant expenses will have to be incurred regardless to properly store operative or dispose of obsolete pesticides.

15. Comment and action requested: USUN Rome Ambassador Hall is hosting a Geneva Group meeting on May 3, 2005, at which the subject of FAO Director-General Diouf's letter will be raised with the FAO donor community. Comments from posts in affected countries as well as guidance from USG agencies are invited. USUN Rome aims to encourage better donor communication and coordination on this issue.

16. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

HALL

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